



Vermont Tobacco Evaluation and Review Board

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To: Sen. Susan Bartlett, Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations
Rep. Martha Heath, Chair, House Committee on Appropriations
Rep. Kathleen Keenan, House Committee on Appropriations
From: Brian S. Flynn, ScD, Chair, Tobacco Evaluation and Review Board
Re: Funding for Comprehensive Tobacco Control Programs FY 2010
Date: March 17, 2009

Our memo of February 18 reviewed reasons for maintaining current funding of the comprehensive tobacco control program. We bring to your attention new information showing the impact of these programs on the most challenging of Vermont's three tobacco control goals.

An estimated 831 Vermonters die prematurely each year from cigarette smoking. The most rapid route to reducing this toll is to help smokers quit. Reducing cigarette smoking has immediate positive impacts on heart disease and longer-term impacts on cancer and lung disease deaths. Helping smokers quit requires time and concentrated resources because smoking is highly addictive and smokers need time to learn how to quit. Eight years of focus on smoking cessation are now yielding results:

- **Larger numbers of smokers are quitting with the help of free cessation services; use of these services more than doubled in FY2009 compared to the same period in FY2008.**
- **Over 62% of Vermont smokers tried to quit last year, compared to 53% in 2007.**
- **Adult smoking declined from 22.3% in 2000 to 16.8% in 2008, significantly faster than the decline in the U.S. as a result of Vermont's comprehensive program.**
- **The death rate attributed to cigarette smoking is declining faster in Vermont than in the U.S. comparing smoking-related deaths in 2000-2004 to those in 1996-1999.**

The comprehensive tobacco program is showing signs of progress on its most difficult goal. Demand for services is increasing and will accelerate with cigarette price increases due to federal excise tax changes. These favorable trends will be blunted if program funding is cut.

The Administration has proposed a 50% cut in funding for the Health Department components of the comprehensive program. These funds support the integrated cessation programs and services that Vermont smokers are seeking. Cigarette smoking remains the most common cause of preventable death and disease and a major contributor to the chronic disease morbidity that Vermont's health care reforms aim to reduce.

We strongly recommend that comprehensive tobacco program funding be maintained. Continued level funding will sustain progress in reducing the significant personal, social, and economic consequences of tobacco use in our state.